



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Menopause results from a decline in estrogen levels, which occurs at an average age of 51 years, but may occur as early as age 40 or as late as age 55. It may also result from medical causes such as surgery to remove the ovaries and certain radiation therapies. This causes menstruation to become irregular and then to stop completely. A majority of women experience symptoms related to the decline in estrogen levels, such as "hot flashes." Some also experience psychological effects, such as depression, related to social and other factors in their lives. Since estrogen protects against osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease, post-menopausal women are at long-term risk for developing these serious health problems. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be prescribed to help women cope with the immediate symptoms of the hormonal changes as well as to prevent long-term health problems. The decision to begin using HRT may be difficult for some women because its use has been linked to the risk of developing breast cancer.

The 1997 California Women's Health Survey asked women whether they were still having periods and whether

they thought women should use HRT. Women who had stopped menstruating were asked about the effects of symptoms on their lives and whether they had sought medical care to help them cope.

Overall, 39% of California women no longer have regular periods. Of these women, about two out of five stopped menstruating for medical or surgical reasons.

Concerning HRT:

- 56% of all women believe post-menstrual women should use HRT.
- 44% of post-menstrual women said they do use HRT.

The impact of menopause-related symptoms on the lives of menopausal women were as follows:

- 5% had lost work time.
- 10% couldn't carry out normal daily activities.
- 23% had depression.
- 32% sought medical care to cope with their symptoms. About half of these reported using HRT.

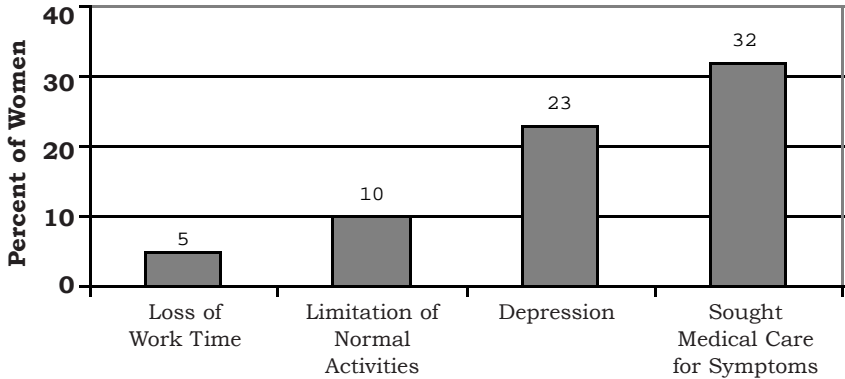
MENOPAUSE-RELATED SYMPTOMS AND USE OF MEDICAL CARE TO TREAT THEM

Maternal and Child Health Branch
Office of Women's Health

Public Health Message:

A large portion of the female population is post-menopausal. Implications of these findings for public health practice includes providing clear information to women so that they can make informed choices about physical changes as they age.

Symptoms/Treatment Related to Menopause; California, 1997



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